



Time Out!

Many people use time out in different ways. There seems to be a lot of confusion about what time out is and how it is to be used.

When parents get frustrated, angry or just tired, often, we need a break from the activities of the day to cool off, rest and regain our composure. We take a TIME OUT! When using time out with our children, it has the same purpose. Being over stimulated or being tired, often precede the need to use time out with our children. Our children need a break; they have gotten angry or too frustrated to deal with the situation in an appropriate manner. Though time out is used as a discipline method, its purpose is to allow the child to cool off so that they can better handle the situation.

Hot to do Time Out

- Stay calm, cool and composed! If you are out of control you cannot expect your child to be in control.
- Announce to your child that time out is about to occur if they do not do, or stop doing whatever it is you desire.
- Pick the place for time out; it could be a corner, a hallway or even their bedroom. The older child will often do fine in a corner away from you and the family. A toddler might need to be placed in their bedroom. There are times when a child is so out of control that you need to put them in their bedroom and have a latch on the outside of the door so that they cannot escape.
- You tell them why they are in time out. You tell them how long they will have to stay in time out. You tell them what they need to do to be able to join the family again. A child under 3 does not need to be in time out for more than a few seconds. If they have gained control and are upset that they have been disciplined, then time is complete. An older child might need to be in a minute per year of age.
- Say to the child, "after the time out is over and you are in control, then you may join us in the family room again." Let the child know that they need to be in control when the time out is over to resume family activities.
- Use a timer, the time escapes us all.
- When time out is over and the child is in control, make sure to tell the child that time out is over and that they are in control, and that you are pleased. "Time out is over, and I am glad that you are in control now. We can all have a nice time again. Thank you."



Troubleshooting

- **Your child will not stay in Time Out anywhere** - I suggest using their bedroom and putting a latch on the outside so they cannot get out. Then start talking about being in control only. Say, "When you are in control you can come out and join the family." Then wait a few minutes (3-5 minutes), longer if older (5-10 minutes) and go to the room, open the door and say "Are you in control yet? Good, come join us in the family room." If your child is not in control, say "I see you are not in control yet, I'm sorry you will have to stay in time out until you are in control."
- **Dealing with damage done during Time Out** - Often children throw things when they are in time out; sometimes they even destroy things. Once they are in control then they need to clean up after themselves. Say to the child, "I am glad that you are in control, you may join us in the kitchen once you pick up these things that you threw during your time out. Do it quickly, we miss you." Sometimes the child starts to lose control again; remind them that time out will start again if they do not keep control while they are picking up after themselves.
- **The child yells and screams during Time Out** - Some things are better ignored. The idea here is control, yelling and screaming is being out of control. This will stop when they are in control
- **The older child who refuses to go to Time Out** - Older children cannot be picked up and carried to time out like a toddler can. In this case there might be other consequences if the child refuses to go. Often TV, videos, computer time and even outdoor play time can be suspended for a period of time or for the remainder of the day if they do not comply. Just remember if you take everything away for a long period of time (greater than a day) there is little reason to behave or comply because they have lost everything for a long time anyway.
- **You are not home when you need Time Out** - The car can serve as a perfect place for time out. You place the child in the car seat, lock them in and close the car door. You say the same things you say at home. You then stand outside the car until the child is in control and time out is over.

Some Final Thoughts...

It does not matter if you are a permissive parent or a strict parent, what matters is that you are persistent, patient, and consistent.

- **PERSISTENT:** Do what you say, and say what you mean! Do not threaten time out, use time out! Follow through with your plans. Be persistent with your child's discipline needs. This is how we teach our children.
- **PATIENT:** Be patient with your child. All children need to learn how to behave and all children need some discipline. Work with their temperament in trying to meet their needs as well. Remember they are children, not little adults, often they do not understand.
- **CONSISTENT:** Do things the same way. You cannot be one parent today and then tomorrow be a different parent, that is confusing and they do not know what to expect. Be consistent in your discipline. Children need to know what to expect from you, they do much better if you react the same every day to similar situations especially discipline.

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